

Oregon Hunters Association

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Testimony In Support of HB 2027A

Chair Dingfelder and Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

For the record my name is Al Elkins, a member of the ODFW Land Owner Preference (LOP) Workgroup and here today representing the Oregon Hunters Association. I am here today in support of the LOP Workgroup recommendations in HB 2027A.

Background Statement

- When the LOP program was first established in 1982, deer and elk populations appeared to be plentiful.
- Over time, the LOP program continued to become more liberalized and realized a significant increase in participation.
- Meanwhile, over the past decade, deer (most notably) and elk numbers have continued to decline and fall below management objectives.
- LOP tag allocations are not tied into population management objectives for specific units and are basically an entitlement.
- In addition, many of the reasons cited by landowners for wanting more LOP tags is damage. This has been a major factor in the liberalization of the LOP program.

Issue Statement

- Since the inception of the LOP program, participation and tag allocations have rose significantly due to the continual liberalization of the program.
- The information provided in the workgroup and shared with the committee today by ODFW demonstrates the growth and liberation of the program.
- Since ODF&W has little control over the numbers of tags issued through the LOP program, reductions must be made in the tag allocations for the general hunting community or cancel the hunt in its entirety.

OHA Supports The LOP Workgroup Recommendations

- OHA supports all the workgroup recommendations including; changing the definition of immediate family; changing the tag distribution formula (currently 33% can go to non- family members) to 50% can go to non-family members and changing the sunset date to 2024 or indefinitely. We would like expand on our support for these two additional workgroup recommendations:

Tie LOP tags to Population Management Objectives For Mule Deer

- LOP tag allocations must be factored in and included with the overall tag allocations for Mule Deer.
- The Mule Deer tag allocations would be set by ODF&W using such factors as management objectives, huntable populations, and projected harvest rates.
- Using the overall allocation method, a given percentage (say 10%) of the overall tag allocation would be issued under LOP.
- If populations fall below the management objective for a particular unit and thus lowering overall tag allocations, tags would be lowered proportionally between the general hunting community and the LOP participants.
- This places the management of the wildlife species in the hands of ODF&W whereby decisions can be made based on biological and scientific factors.

Expand the SW Elk Pilot to all of Oregon and Remove the 2:1 tag split/exchange from the base LOP program as it will be replaced by the Pilot

- The SW Elk Pilot Program is an important program as it addresses damage by elk and should be instituted statewide.
- Under this program, minimum acreage is reduced, tags can go to anyone, and more tags can be issued.
- Using this method, ODF&W biologists can weigh in on all factors such as determining the extent of damage, numbers of animals causing the damage, damage control options, and effectiveness of a given control method prior to implementation.
- Other options that ODF&W may choose from may include controlled hunts, emergency hunts, take permits, or hazing. While aspects of this program may be more liberal than options in the existing LOP program, this places the management of the wildlife species directly in the hands of ODF&W.
- This allows ODF&W to select the appropriate damage control tool based on biological and circumstantial factors.

Conclusion

While the LOP program has served its purpose over the years, changing circumstances have elevated the need to reevaluate and make adjustments to the existing program. All aspects of the program must be considered. The LOP program has significant flaws that impede ODF&W's ability to properly and responsibly manage the deer and elk populations in Oregon. Oregon cannot afford to extend the sunset period for the existing program without changes and wait six more years before these issues can be addressed.

That concludes my testimony, I will be glad to answer any questions.